

MAKING CONNECTIONS: Strategies for Schools Against Gangs

What is a gang? *An ongoing organization, association or group of three or more people, whether formal or informal, which have a common name, signs, colors or symbols and who have individually or collectively engaged in criminal activity*

Juvenile street gang members transcend age, gender, ethnicity and socio-economic status. Gang involvement doesn't happen overnight and youth who join have different backgrounds and circumstances that lead to their involvement.

There are however, some common characteristics that they share. Initiated gang members are most likely between the ages of 12 and 25, although they can be much younger or on into adulthood. While gangs are predominantly male, female membership is continually growing. Members are often from homes where there is little supervision or a high level of family conflict. Gang members are often low academic performers, truant, and cause disciplinary problems both at home and and may act out as indifferent, angry and apathetic.



Consider multiple indicators. No one single indicator can alone be sufficient for predicting gang involvement, aggression or tendencies toward violence.

- Tattoos/burns
- Hand signs/handshakes
- Signs of drug use
- Friendships/associations
- Negative changes in behavior
- Clothing/Drawings/Writings/Language
- Unexplained physical injuries, cash or goods
- Gang symbols or graffiti on student's personal belongings, notebooks, homework, lockers, etc.
- Unusual interest in gangster-influenced music, websites, clothing, colors

**“Gang-like”
does not equal
“gang associated”**
*
**Information
sharing is vital**



READ • RECORD • REPORT • REMOVE

Schools must maintain a zero tolerance policy against gang activity, graffiti, clothing styles and use of signs.

Establish clear and consistent rules throughout school regarding gang activity at school. Schools are neutral territory, ruled by the administrators and teachers, and that message must be clearly and consistently sent to all students. Enforce your dress code.

- Prohibit the displaying of gang tattoos, “flying” their colors and other use of gang symbolism.
- Work with SROs or local law enforcement on identification and suppression strategies. Encourage their participation in school events and presentations.
- Educate staff about gangs, warning signs and indicators.
- Document and abate graffiti as soon as possible.
- Remember that early warning signs are just that, indicators that a child may need our help and guidance. Address concerns early, before problems escalate.
- Engage students in community service or service-learning projects.

For more information, visit gangfreekansas.org